

Daddy Dearest

Written by Written by Melissa Larsen / Photographed by Cassandra Tomei

In celebration of Father's Day, six very special Valley pops share their proudest moments in fatherhood.



"There are so many proud moments being a father. I think No. 1 would have to be the day he was born, healthy—albeit a little blue—and bringing him home from the hospital. As he has grown to the old age of six, he has developed into a very talkative, bright and sometimes overzealous young boy, which I attribute to good genes and, most importantly, to my wife who at a very early age began reading to him. A close second would have to be when he climbed into our bed in the middle of the night when we he was around two years old, pulled my eyelids open and said, 'Daddy, I love you.'" —Dr. James Loo of Premier Family Care and father of Nicolas, 6



"The proudest day that I have had as a father has to have been taking my little preemie home from the hospital. I saw how he fought for every breath. I remember looking at him and saying to myself that I will be the father to him that I never had. Eighteen years later, I am proud of the man that he has become. He cares for those who are the most vulnerable. He is respectful to his mother and other women, but most importantly, he is quick to say he was wrong and give a hug to anyone he has offended." —Vernon B. Parker, attorney/consultant and father of Ian, 18, and stepfather of Sonya



"My proudest moments as a father are when my children show independence. I feel that as parents, independence is an important lesson to teach our children. My oldest is in the third grade, and I love when he gets projects from school. I get a chance to see him get the assignment, do research on the subject and, most importantly, I get to see the joy and excitement on his face when he receives a good grade. I try to get him to understand that the path to success is paved by hard work. When he does a project by himself and uses the resources he has to accomplish his goal, it tells me I am preparing my son to be a man." —Michael Robinson, Seattle Seahawks Pro Bowl fullback (and Chandler resident) and father of Mikayla, 4, and Burton Michael "B5," 2, and stepfather of Raylin, 8

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"My proudest moment as a father would have to be when my 3-year-old daughter gave me a compliment I won't ever forget. It was right after one of the first times she watched me on TV cooking for a segment. When I came home, she walked up to me with such pride, looked me in the eye, and told me I was her prince charming. Her genuine excitement was better than any constructive praise I could have received. Those words coming from my little girl made all the hard work and late nights during these past 15 years worth it." —Johnny Chu, executive chef at The Mint and father of Maila Q, 3, and Livya Q, 2



"Brady and I have always been extremely close, which made narrowing down my proudest moment as a father difficult. Between teaching him sports, learning to snowboard together and attending every Notre Dame and Yankees game possible, we are the best of friends. However, the one memory that continues to resonate with me happened this past February when he received the opportunity to be a standard bearer at the Waste Management Phoenix Open. With thousands of people gathered to watch the players tee off, all I could see was Brady thinking 'I will be here playing soon.' He gave me that look that every father dreams of—something that I will cherish forever." —Tom Hatten, owner and president of Mountainside Fitness and father of Brady, 14



"My proudest moment came very unexpectedly during a family trip last March to San Francisco. On Saturday morning, we stopped in Union Square to take a few pictures. As my wife and kids joked around in various poses, I watched with a huge smile on my face as I realized my daughters had grown up to be really great kids. Additionally, while I knew they were sisters, they also could have been confused for best friends. That trip was a defining moment for me as a father and also made me realize how lucky I am to have such a dedicated wife and mother." —Andy Beams, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of DMB Associates and father of Blake, 18, and Jaden, 16
